Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

5 December 2017

English only

2017 Meeting
Geneva, 4-8 December 2017
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Issues of substance and process for the period before the next Review Conference, with a view to reaching consensus on an intersessional process

The European Union's continued support for strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Submitted by the European Union

I. Introduction

1. In line with its position set out in Council Decision 2015/2096/CFSP (circulated on 12 April 2016 as working paper under reference BWC/CONF.VIII/WP.5), the European Union (EU) engaged proactively and constructively in the preparatory process leading up to and during the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) held in November 2016 in Geneva with a view to building consensus for a successful outcome of the Conference.

2. In this respect, the Union supported, inter alia, a new substantive work programme during the period between the Eighth and Ninth Review Conferences with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the Convention.

3. The European Union has in particular promoted the following topics for a new intersessional programme:

- national implementation and compliance;
- further work on Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) following the Eighth Review Conference;
- assistance and cooperation under Article VII of the Convention;
- developments in science and technology;
- review of the Consultative Committee procedure;
- universalisation.

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II. European Union's BTWC assistance programme: state of play (February 2016 – November 2017)

4. Despite the lack of agreement at the Eighth Review Conference on intersessional work programme the European Union continued its strong political and financial support for the Convention, including through the consistent and comprehensive implementation by the BTWC Implementation Support Unit of the EU's fourth assistance programme laid down in Council Decision 2016/51/CFSP. An overall budget of 2, 340 million EUR has been made available to this end.

5. The activities that have been organised by the BTWC Implementation Support Unit within the framework of Council Decision 2016/51/CFSP since its adoption on 18 January 2016 are outlined below.

Project 1: Support for BTWC universalisation

Purpose

To promote universal adherence to the BTWC by encouraging States not party to better understand the benefits of joining the Convention and getting more involved in its meetings and other activities.

Implemented activities

Regional workshop on BTWC universalisation for the Pacific region (Nadi, Fiji, 27-28 July 2017)

With five States in the Pacific region not yet party to the BTWC (Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue, Samoa and Tuvalu), the main objective of the regional workshop was to raise awareness of the Convention in the region and to promote the efforts of these States towards accession. Around 40 participants from across the region attended the workshop. Since the workshop, on 21 September 2017, Samoa deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention.

A full workshop report is available at

https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/8645248E8B8A7C8680C1258167C0053AC46/$file/Fiji+seminar+-+Summary+Report.pdf

Planned activities

A number of further universalisation activities will be conducted on bilateral and regional basis in 2018, in particular in Africa.

Project 2: Interaction with non-governmental stakeholders on science and technology

Purpose

To enhance the interaction between the BTWC process and non-governmental stakeholders, such as the scientific community and industry, through the organisation of regional workshops on scientific and technological issues and on biosafety and biosecurity. This project would furthermore directly engage scientists and biosafety professionals in developing countries in order to raise awareness of the Convention, to develop capacities for more effective implementation and to facilitate international cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Implemented activities

Regional workshop for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Kyiv, Ukraine, 21-22 September 2017)

Around 50 national and international experts from 10 BTWC States Parties (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, United States of America) as well as from international and regional organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Science and Technology Centre Ukraine (STCU), the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC), Regional Secretariats (Central Asia, South Eastern and Eastern Europe) of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence, UNODA Geneva Branch, and the European External Action Service).

Planned activities

Subsequent regional workshops are scheduled to take place in 2018 in Jordan (for the Middle East), Mexico (for Latin America), Republic of South Africa (for Africa) as well as in Asia (location to be confirmed).

Project 3: Capacity development for BTWC implementation

Purpose

The Seventh Review Conference reaffirmed that the enactment and implementation of necessary national measures would strengthen the effectiveness of the BTWC. The Conference called upon States Parties to adopt legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures, including awareness-raising and codes of conduct, designed to enhance domestic implementation of the Convention and to ensure the safety and security of microbial or other biological agents or toxins. Based on experiences gained through previous EU assistance programmes (namely Joint Action 2008/858/CFSP and Council Decision 2012/421/CFSP), extended national BTWC implementation assistance programmes will be provided.

Implemented activities

EU Workshop in support of the BTWC extended assistance programmes (Geneva, 29 March 2017)

The workshop brought together over 40 participants, including experts nominated by EU Member States and representatives of international organisations and non-governmental organisations, including from Interpol, the International Federation of Biosafety Associations (IFBA), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the EU European External Action Service and European Commission.

The workshop aimed at discussing best practices in preparation for the extended assistance programmes and lessons learned in the delivery of assistance, in order to enable the experts to effectively support national implementation of the Convention by beneficiary States Parties.

A full workshop report is available at

https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/BA3F8DB2E27E2BA0C125811E00317AF6/$file/2017-03-29_REPORT+of+Workshop+in+Support+of+the+BWC+Extended+Assistance+Programmes.pdf

Assistance programmes

After the launch of the application process, the Implementation Support Unit received applications from 30 BTWC States Parties. A rigorous evaluation process saw these 30 whittled down to 10 States Parties: Cameroon, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Iraq, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Yemen.

Each programme will run for approximately 12 months and will comprise:

- kick-off national workshop to make an initial assessment of needs and priorities
- development of a structured Action Plan, tailored for the beneficiary country, and its execution with assistance by international experts (e.g. drafting of legislation, bio-safety/bio-security training, dual use export control, CBMs preparation and submission, awareness-raising for scientists, emergency response planning, etc.)
- wrap-up workshop following the conclusion of the activities

Project 4: Support for the intersessional programme and preparations for the Eighth Review Conference (completed)

Purpose

To help mobilise BTWC States Parties for active participation in the Eighth Review Conference through organising regional workshops and offering opportunities to reflect on and discuss key topics of the 2012-2015 inter-sessional programme. It also includes practical support for topics which have been discussed during the intersessional programme, such as the concept of a peer review mechanism.

Implemented activities

Regional workshop for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Astana, Kazakhstan, 15-16 June 2016)

The workshop was attended by 51 persons representing 9 regional States Parties (Afghanistan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan), one observer State Party (United States of America), 6 EU MS (Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom) as well as international organisations and academic institutions such as UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), EU CBRN Centres of Excellence, European External Action Service, University of Bradford (United Kingdom), and University of Sussex (United Kingdom).

Full report is available at

https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/88B4678D2E65F3EFC12580B10058DFE8/$file/20161101+Kazakhstan+Regional+seminar+-+Summary+Report.pdf

Regional workshop for Latin America (Brasília, Brazil, 22-23 August 2016)

The workshop was attended by 61 persons representing 14 regional States Parties (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela), one observer State Party (Russian Federation), 5 EU MS (Belgium, France, Hungary, Slovenia, Spain) as well as international organisations and academic institutions such as UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), European External Action Service, and Academy of Sciences of Cuba.

Full report is available at

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80B100595660/$file/20161031+Brasilia+Regional+seminar+-
+Summary+Report.pdf

Regional workshop for South and South-East Asia (New Delhi, India, 29-30 August 2016)

The workshop was attended by 60 persons representing 12 regional States Parties (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Lao Democratic Peoples Republic, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam), 4 observer States Parties (Brazil, Japan, Russian Federation, United States of America), 4 EU MS (Belgium, France, Hungary, Sweden) as well as international organisations and academic institutions such as UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), European External Action Service, Biosafety and Biosecurity Association (Philippines), and University of Sussex (United Kingdom).

Full report is available at

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+Summary+Report.pdf

Regional workshop for Africa (African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13-14 September 2016)

The workshop was attended by 44 persons representing 18 regional States Parties (Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), 2 observer States Parties (Russian Federation, United States of America), 2 EU MS (Hungary, United Kingdom) as well as international organisations and academic institutions such as African Union Commission (AUC), UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), EU CBRN Centres of Excellence, European External Action Service, Biorisk Management Association (Kenya), Institute for Security Studies (South Africa), and University of Sussex (United Kingdom).

Full report is available at

https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/AA5EE2CCF004762FC12
580B10059A013/$file/20161031+Addis+Ababa+Regional+seminar+-
+Summary+Report.pdf

Sponsorship programme

Funding under this EU Council Decision was used to support participation by national experts from developing countries in the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee in August 2016, as well as in the Review Conference itself in November 2016. Experts from the following States Parties were supported: Afghanistan,

Armenia, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Bhutan, Cameroon, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lao Democratic Peoples Republic, Lebanon, Mali, Malawi, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Sudan, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Australia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland also contributed to the sponsorship programme.

Peer review exercise

Morocco hosted a BTWC peer review exercise on 9-11 may 2017. The exercise was attended by 45 national representatives, 16 international experts from 10 BTWC States Parties (Belgium, China, France, Gabon, Germany, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, United Arab Emirates, United States of America) and the BTWC Implementation Support Unit.

The exercise aimed at strengthening national implementation of the Convention, improving confidence in compliance by increased transparency, and deepening international cooperation. It built upon the three previous peer reviews conducted in France (2013), the BENELUX countries (2015) and Germany (2016).

Project 5: Support to the UN Secretary General's Mechanism

Purpose

Support strengthening the preparedness of the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological and Toxin Weapons (SGM).

Activities (managed by the UNODA WMD Branch in New York)

- one basic and one specialised training course offered to experts nominated to the SGM Roster
- meeting of SGM stakeholders as an inter- and intra-organisational mechanism for cooperation
- two cross-organisational training events to be co-organised (with the OPCW) to better coordinate existing resources and best practices and avoid overlapping efforts

Project 6: Enabling tools for awareness-raising, education and engagement

Purpose

To produce concrete and practical tools, materials and approaches to enable the activities described in the projects above. Such tools will be produced in formats appropriate to their audiences, including printed versions, and will, in general, require translation to all official languages of the United Nations. To promote the use of the tools which were produced during the former EU-actions: the CBM-guide and the national implementation guide.

Activities

The implementation Support Unit has produced an introductory guide to the BTWC which is used at workshops and other meetings to raise awareness of the Convention and its obligations. An electronic version is available at

https://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/6D16C7B1933F0937C125815D00349763/$file/BWS+brochure.pdf

Work is currently ongoing to finalise an electronic platform for the submission of annual CBM reports, a project which was started under an earlier EU Joint Action in support of the BTWC. An updated version of the CBM Guide and a National Implementation Guide will also be produced and translated into other UN languages.

III. BTWC Meeting of States Parties (4-8 December 2017)

6. The implementation of Council Decision 2016/51/CFSP testifies to the firm EU commitment to the strengthening of the BTWC despite the disappointing outcome of the 2016 Review Conference and the lack of agreement on, inter alia, dedicated intersessional programme underpinning the Convention's implementation and universalisation.

7. However, assistance provided through voluntary contributions, including EU Council Decisions should be seen as important activities that help strengthen the Convention but are not intended as a substitute for formal meetings within the BTWC proper framework.

8. The European Union and its Member States are therefore actively and constructively engaged in the ongoing discussions with a view to preparing in the best possible way the Meeting of States Parties in December 2017.

9. In accordance with the aforementioned EU position and activities, the European Union firmly supports the fulfilment of the MSP's mandate as laid down in the Final Document of the Eighth Review Conference, including 'reaching consensus on an intersessional process' and adopting decision on a work programme during the period until the Ninth Review Conference.

10. In this respect, the paper put forward by United Kingdom, United States of America and Russian Federation "BTWC 2017 Meeting of States Parties: Elements of a Possible Outcome" represents a good basis for reaching a consensus on a draft Decision and the growing broad-based support for the paper is welcome.